MS. ORTMEYER: My name is Pat Ortmeyer; I'm field director for nuclear waste issues with WAND, Women's Action for New Directions. And we also want to thank you for holding the hearing today in Atlanta. It's crucial that all who are affected by the Yucca Mountain program have the opportunity

to learn about and comment on this proposal. Atlanta is just one site of many, many along the
1... transportation routes. And I wanted to make a comment about a statement made earlier regarding the availability of continued on-site storage to allow for decay of the short-lived radionuclides. I believe Representative Orrock was correct in noting that these short-lived gamma-emitting radionuclides in spent fuel are far decreased when allowed to decay for about 50 years, and it's much safer for workers and people along transportation routes.

WAND, my organization, has for many years focused on issues related to environmental contamination at U.S. Department of Energy nuclear weapons facilities. We're also working on issues related to the Department's surplus military plutonium disposition program. As currently conceived by the Department, both the cleanup of the weapons complex and the effort to dispose of surplus-weapons plutonium depends in part on the existence of an appropriate deep geologic
2... repository for nuclear waste. While the need to isolate high-level nuclear waste from the environment is paramount, Yucca Mountain does not

2 cont. provide what's necessary to achieve that goal. The legislative mandate for the Yucca Mountain program directs that a geologic disposal site be selected. This is based on the logic that, because we cannot engineer with confidence a means of containing nuclear waste for the hundreds of thousands of years for which it will remain hazardous, it's better to ensure that it can be contained by other means, namely stable geologic structures that could contain the waste even if the engineered barriers were to fail.

This concept has been turned on its head with the Yucca Mountain proposal as it currently stands. As studies on Yucca Mountain have been conducted over the years, serious problems have been found such as the seepage of surface water into the site along fracture lines, a high level of seismic activity in the area and the possibility of the uprising of hot water into the

3... site from below. Given such findings, the Department itself is clear that the Yucca Mountain site cannot be depended upon to contain the waste; but, rather than abandon the site, it set out to design the undesignable: a container that can guarantee it will isolate the waste for as long as

3 cont. it remains hazardous. It's impossible for the Department, regardless of what new technology or alloys may be invented, to certify that an engineered container will hold up over the hundreds of thousands of years necessary to protect the environment and the public from releases from the sites.

If we now accept that we must rely upon engineered barriers to contain the waste, then this program needs to be scrapped and redesigned from the bottom up. Yucca Mountain could not be said to have any distinct geologic advantage over any other site. There's a real possibility that no proposed geologic site in the United States would be able to meet the fundamental requirements

6 for waste containment. Based upon this, at the very least, we must reexamine the fact that we continue to rely on nuclear power as an energy source which produces waste for which there is no means of safe disposal.

1 cont. But for existing waste we must find better storage, management and disposal methods, and we challenge the Department to continue to search for technologically and environmentally sound options that do not rely on compromises in order to work.

1 ccont. The failures of Yucca Mountain should be a loud signal to us that we cannot simply sweep nuclear waste under a carpet of volcanic tuff and hope it'll go away. It will not go away. Those who know that most acutely are the Waestern Shoshone people who claim Yucca Mountain as sacred land and who will be the first people exposed when Yucca Mountain leaks.

4 The current Yucca Mountain program as outlined in the DEIS balances an absurd tower of lies, poor science, lack of caring, self protection and an advanced case of "wishing will make it so." Wishing will not turn Yucca Mountain into a suitable geologic repository. We can weaken standards, change the rules, lower the bar or look the other way; but for our security and the security of thousands of generations to come, we're far better served by abandoning Yucca Mountain as a high-level waste repository, ceasing the production of more high-level waste and applying our best science and deepest caring to finding a better way.

MS. SWEENEY: Thank you.

MR. LAWSON: Thank you. The next speaker is Bobbie Wrenn Banks, to be followed by Mary Olsen

and then by Anna Vizrraga.

6